Abstract ID : 784

Title : Recording methods for evidence of human interactions on stranded bottlenose dolphins, Tursiops truncatus, in North Carolina, USA

Category : Strandings

Student : Not Applicable

Preferred Format : Poster Presentation

Abstract : From 1997 through 2002, 732 bottlenose dolphins, Tursiops truncatus, stranded along the coast of North Carolina, USA. The marine mammal stranding network assesses these live and dead dolphins for signs of human interactions. External and internal characteristics were used to classify all carcasses with regard to whether or not mortality may have been due to a human interaction (HI): Yes, No, or CBD (Could not Be Determined). External evidence supporting a Yes classification included a carcass pulled from active gear or with attached gear, net or line impressions in the epidermis, appendage cleanly cut-off, knife cuts, or propeller wounds. A fresh carcass without signs of HI was classified as No and presumed to have died from natural causes. Any carcass that was too decomposed or unable to be examined properly was classified conservatively as CBD. Carcasses with positive signs of HI were further categorized as Fishery Interactions (FI), Mutilations, or Other. Carcasses classified as FI included carcasses pulled from active gear or with attached gear, or net or line impressions in the epidermis. This study focused on carcasses determined to be HI, and each record was reviewed for type of mark and location on the body, and value of photographs for categorizing marks. 68 stranding records categorized Yes for HI were analyzed. The most common types of fishery marks recorded were unspecified line (n=30, 44%), unspecified net (n=22, 32%) and criss-cross (n=14, 21%). These markings were found on the head (49% of carcasses), pectoral and dorsal fins (60%) and the tail region (53%). Photographs were useful on 47 records, not useful on 18, and were not provided 3 times. A goal of this study is to standardize the recording and interpretation of HI marks on carcasses to increase the value of strandings in monitoring interactions with fisheries.